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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0071  
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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER)  
JUSTICE FOR DEA/OS/OSE (MCMANAMON)  
BRUSSELS FOR DOJ/DEA (SCARANTINO)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2019  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [SNAR](#) [EG](#) [UK](#) [SL](#)  
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON PLANE LANDING: CONTINUED DETENTION

REF: FREETOWN 327

Classified By: Ambassador June Carter Perry for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (S) Summary: Embassy learned at 1930 GMT on August 20 that the eight detained individuals connected to the reftel plane were released by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) following brief interviews. However, the individuals were then re-detained at 1000 GMT at the orders of the Vice President, and continue to be in detention on August 21. Sources informed post that they have information connecting the individuals to the Horseshoe Fishing Company, which is involved in narco-trafficking. It is unclear how long the two Americans, three Brits, and three Egyptians might be detained. End Summary.

12. (S) Poloff received a call from a high-level intelligence contact on August 20, informing her that the individuals had been released from detention. He said that the SLP, which did not have authority to release the individuals, were bribed. In a meeting on August 21, source told DCM that the Vice President "hit the roof" and insisted that the eight people be re-detained. As noted reftel, the individuals appear to be connected to the Horseshoe Fishing Company, which has been under surveillance by Sierra Leonean intelligence for some time. Source told DCM that the Egyptian company came into Sierra Leone 4 years ago, intending to register seven fishing boats. However, no boats have been registered and intelligence indicates that they are moving narcotics through the Lungi Airport.

13. (S) Consular officers are currently visiting the detained American pilots. According to information provided by their family members to the Operations Center, they work for the UK-based MK Airlines. The family members also reported that they had been taken by "unknown forces" and "held against their wills." Embassy information indicates that they have been lawfully detained, but have not yet been formally arrested.

14. (S) Comment: With the involvement of the Executive Branch, no chances are being taken that this plane and its passengers will "disappear" with the help of bribed low- and mid-level authorities. Post continues to gather information and assist as it can (Note: Sierra Leonean security contacts were grateful for the information provided by the DEA on the plane. End Note). It is well within the realm of possibility that the contracted airline and crew have no knowledge of potential criminal wrongdoing by their clients. End Comment.  
PERRY